

1. A waterjet boat in which forward and reverse propulsion is provided by one or more jets of water directed generally longitudinally, the boat comprising:

a steering system including at least one nozzle capable of rotation about a generally vertical axis for deflecting at least one jet to impart a side component of force to the stern of the boat and a bow thruster that tends to rotate the boat about a vertical axis and to produce a sideward movement of the bow of the boat;

a joystick device for use by the operator of the boat for manual control of the steering system;

an autopilot configured to be engaged when the boat is moving at a very low speed (less than about 4 knots) and that controls the steering system to maintain the bow of the boat pointed in a desired direction,

wherein the bow thruster is manually controlled by a first movement of the joystick device, wherein the nozzle is manually controlled by a second movement of the joystick device, and wherein forward and aft thrust of the waterjet is manually controlled by a third movement of the joystick device.

2. The boat of claim 1 wherein the joystick device has a stick control member, and the first movement is sideward movement of the stick control member, the second movement is rotation of the stick control member, and the third movement is forward and aft movement of the stick control member.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the very low speed is about 2 knots.

4. The boat of claim 1 wherein the joystick device has a stick control member that is biased to a neutral position by a centering force.

5. The boat of claim 4 wherein the joystick device has a stick control member capable of rotation and with a neutral zero rotation position, and the stick control member is biased by a centering torque such that it returns to its neutral position when released by the operator.

6. The boat of claim 5 wherein the centering torque that biases the stick control member to its neutral position is provided by a spring.
7. The boat of claim 1 wherein the autopilot also operates when the boat is traveling at higher speeds, which are speeds higher than the very low speed.
8. The boat of claim 1 wherein the joystick device has a stick control member and the stick control member is used to steer the boat at the higher speeds.
9. The boat of claim 8 wherein at the higher speeds the steering system steers the boat towards port or starboard when the stick control member is displaced from its neutral position.
10. The boat of claim 9 wherein the operator is actively commanding the stick control member to change the boat's course when the operator displaces the stick control member from its neutral position.
11. The boat of claim 5 wherein the autopilot is engaged whenever the stick control member is in its neutral position.